

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth**  
**Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020**  
**Sacrament of the Lord's Supper**  
**Second Sunday in Advent**  
**Worship Leader: Rev. Stephen Dunkin**

**Invitation To Worship**

A voice cries:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,  
 make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”

As we worship today,

let us prepare to welcome God's dramatic work in our midst,  
 in our hearts, in our community, and in all of creation.

Let us worship God as we join together in the Responsive Call To Worship.

**Responsive Call to Worship (Romans 13:11-12)**

You know what time it is,

how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep.

**For salvation is nearer to us now  
 than when we became believers;  
 the night is far gone, the day is near.**

Let us then lay aside the works of darkness  
 and put on the armor of light.

**Come, let us worship God.**

**Prayer of Invocation**

God of Israel,  
 with expectant hearts  
 we your people await Christ's coming.

As once he came in humility,  
 so now may he come in glory,  
 that he may make all things perfect  
 in your everlasting kingdom.

For he is Lord for ever and ever. **Amen.**

**Hymn #115:**

**“Hail To The Lord's Anointed”**

(I apologize that this tune is unfamiliar. It was all I could find.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCCwBqiQdk>

Hail to the Lord's anointed,  
 Great David's greater Son!

Hail in the time appointed,  
 His reign on earth begun!  
 He comes to break oppression,  
 To set the captive free;  
 To take away transgression,  
 And rule in equity.

He brings salvation speedy  
 To those who suffer wrong;  
 He saves the poor and needy,  
 And helps the weak be strong;  
 They sing who once were sighing,  
 Their darkness turn to light,  
 For they who once were dying,  
 Are precious in His sight.

He shall come down like showers  
 Upon the fruitful earth;  
 Love, joy, and hope, like flowers,  
 Spring in His path to birth.  
 Before Him, on the mountains,  
 Shall peace, the herald, go,  
 And righteousness, in fountains,  
 From hill to valley flow.

All powers shall fall down before Him,  
 And gold and incense bring;  
 All nations shall adore Him,  
 His praise all people sing;  
 For He shall have dominion  
 O'er river, sea and shore,  
 Far as the eagle's pinion  
 Or dove's light wing can soar.

O'er every foe victorious,  
 He on His throne shall rest;  
 From age to age more glorious,  
 All blessing and all blest.  
 The tide of time shall never  
 His covenant remove;  
 His name shall stand forever,  
 His name to us is Love.

## **Invitation to Confession**

Prepare the way of the Lord!  
 Let us make our confession to God.

### **Unison Prayer of Confession**

**O promised Christ:**

**We are a world at war.**

**Our peace depends on your coming.**

**We are a sinful people.**

**Our pardon depends on your coming.**

**We are full of good intentions but weak at keeping promises;**

**our only hope of doing God's will**

**is that you should come and help us do it.**

**Lord Christ, Word made flesh,**

**our world waits**

**for your peace,**

**for your pardon,**

**and for your grace.**

**Even so: come, Lord Jesus. Amen.**

### **Assurance of Pardon**

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

Your sins are pardoned.

The penalty is paid.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.**

**Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.**

**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.**

**For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory,**

**Forever and ever. Amen**

### **Hymn #119 (Verses 1 & 2)**

**"Hope is a star"** (No lyrics on screen)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuZgdGD\\_Aq4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuZgdGD_Aq4)

Hope is a star that shines in the night,  
leading us on till the morning is bright.

*Refrain:* When God is a child

there's joy in our song.

The last shall be first

and the weak shall be strong,

and none shall be afraid.

Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,  
giving a promise of safety and worth.

*Refrain:* When God is a child  
there's joy in our song.  
The last shall be first  
and the weak shall be strong,  
and none shall be afraid.

### **“Lighting the Advent Candle of Peace”**

Followers of Jesus born in Bethlehem, our God desires a people who will hold fast to the vision of His Kingdom – a Kingdom where mercy, justice and peace reign.

**Lord, may we be a people who know Your peace.**

Followers of Jesus born in Bethlehem, our God longs for a people who know what He desires – that you act justly and love mercy and walk humbly with your God.

**Lord, may we be a people who are transformed by Your peace.**

Followers of Jesus born in Bethlehem, our God yearns for people resist the ways of the world and reject vengeance, anger and hate as the means of dealing with issues.

**Lord, may we be people who daily live out the peace of Christ in our hearts.**

### **Lighting of the Second Advent Candle of Peace**

Let us pray together...

**Lord God Almighty, we acknowledge that You are the God of peace who calls us to know Your peace and to live in peace with our heavenly Father and with our neighbours. May the light of Jesus Your Son, the Light of the world, shine on the path we walk as we await the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. Amen.**

### **Responsive Reading: Psalm 85:1-2,8-13**

You, LORD, showed favor to your land;  
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

**You forgave the iniquity of your people  
and covered all their sins.**

I will listen to what God the LORD says;  
he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—  
but let them not turn to folly.

**Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,  
that his glory may dwell in our land.**

Love and faithfulness meet together;  
righteousness and peace kiss each other.

**Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,  
and righteousness looks down from heaven.**

The LORD will indeed give what is good,  
and our land will yield its harvest.

**Righteousness goes before him  
and prepares the way for his steps.**

## Ministry of Music

### Responsive Invitation to the Offering

Give to the Lord the glory due his name;  
bring an offering and come before him.

**We will sacrifice a thank offering to God  
and call on the name of the Lord.**

**We will fulfill our vows to the Lord,  
in the presence of all God's people.**

Let each of us use whatever gift we have received,  
faithfully sharing God's grace in many forms.

**Freely we have received; freely we will give.**

### Offertory Prayer

What can I give him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.

If I were a wise man, I would do my part.

Yet what I can, I give him, give him my heart. **Amen.**

### Scripture Reading:

**Luke 3:1-6**

#### ***John the Baptist Prepares the Way***

**1** In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— **2** during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. **3** He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **4** As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,

make straight paths for him.  
**5** Every valley shall be filled in,  
 every mountain and hill made low.  
 The crooked roads shall become straight,  
 the rough ways smooth.  
**6** And all people will see God's salvation.' ”

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Prayer of Illumination**

God of the universe, revealed to us in Holy Scripture through the writings of the prophets and the preaching of John the Baptist, you have called us to prepare our hearts for your visitation. Ready us now to hear your Word and to respond as faithful servants, to the glory of Christ. **Amen.**

## **“Preparing the Way For Jesus”**

**Luke 3:1-6**

The season leading up to Christmas is one of preparation. Even during this pandemic, everywhere you go, people are getting ready to celebrate the holiday. I usually find that I am so busy preparing for other things, that I have little or no time to do Christmas preparation. Christmas day usually comes on me unexpectedly, like a thief in the night! This year, things will be different with no in church Christmas Eve Service and with my only having to preach two Sundays a month.

Preparation is so important if we are to properly celebrate Christmas and the birth of Christ. Preparation is the theme of our Scripture lesson this second Sunday in Advent. I believe that it is important for us to be reminded of how important preparation is in every area of our lives, and not just for Christmas. There are going to be times when events come upon us suddenly when we will have no time to prepare. At such times we have to rely on our previous life training and life preparation.

However, if you have the time to prepare for something, but don't, then the result is often disaster. I can remember only one time in my life when I deliberately walked into the pulpit on a Sunday morning unprepared. It was halfway through my first student mission appointment up in Lanark Highlands and I was at the advanced age

of 21. I had been preaching for two months, but I was disappointed by the lack of response on the part of the people in that little backwoods country community. I don't remember now just what I was expecting on their part, but on my part I found that my preaching lacked power.



As I pondered the situation, I concluded that my preaching lacked power because I just wasn't trusting God enough. What I needed to make my preaching dynamic was to step into the pulpit on a Sunday morning and to just trust God to give me what I was to proclaim that morning. I had read of other preachers in the past that had done similar things.

So instead of preparation, I spent the week in prayer, asking God to give me the Word I was to proclaim. Saturday night came, and the Lord had given me **nothing** to preach on. Sunday morning dawned and the Lord had given me nothing. I drove to little St. Peter's Church in Tatlock, but the Lord gave me **nothing**. I started the service, and I had **nothing**. I got to the point in the service of reading the Scripture lesson for the day, but still I had **nothing**. I let my Bible fall open, and read the first passage my eyes fell upon. I think it was from Romans,



but I was unfamiliar with it and had nothing to say in the way of a message. When the time came to start the sermon, I still had **nothing**, so I just gave a running commentary on a passage that I knew nothing about. It was very short and it was very embarrassing. No one had a clue what I was talking about, but then, neither did I. Mercifully the whole ghastly affair soon came to an end.

You may think that my problems were over, but the truth of the matter is that I still had another church to preach at; another service to conduct. As I drove to Clyde Forks, stark despair gripped my heart. My mind was a blank. I could think of nothing. I concluded that God had abandoned me in my foolishness.



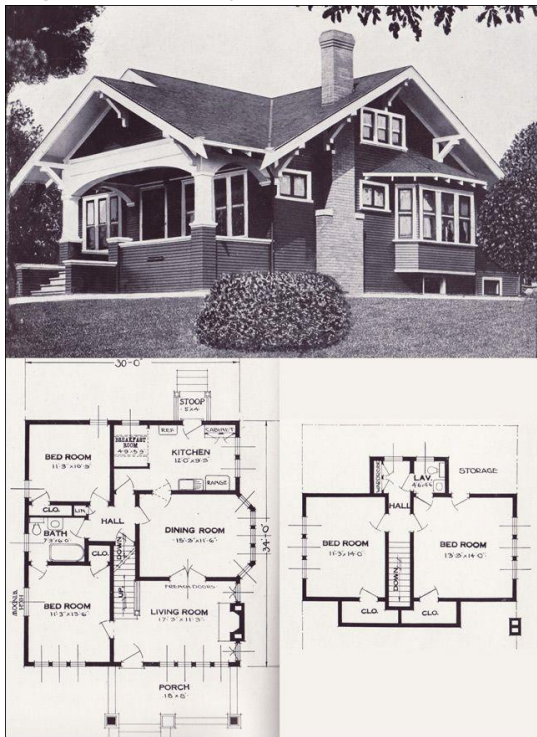
I arrived at the church and sat in the back row as the faithful began to arrive. As I stepped into the pulpit, I knew that doom was about to fall on me once again.

Suddenly, the back door burst open and in rushed Mabel who was the church custodian and who lived across the road from the church. She had just gotten off the phone. Old Mrs. Johnston from Flower Station had died suddenly and the family wanted the student minister to come. I rose to my feet and addressed the little flock that were gathered. “Let us say a word

of prayer for the Johnston’s. Then I will go down to see the family. Under the circumstances, I think it would be best if we cancelled the service.” You see, God had not abandoned me.



There is little in life that doesn’t need some preparation. If a new baby is expected, the parents don’t wait until the baby comes home from the hospital to pull things together. They make sure the baby’s room is ready. They make sure they have everything the baby is going to need on hand – clothes, blankets, diapers, bumper pads, baby powder, etc.



When you build a house, you don’t just start to nail boards together. You need a plan. You need blueprints. You need to clear the site. You need the necessary permits. You have to arrange the financing. You need to lay out the exact location of the house, the driveway, power lines, sewer and water services or well and weeping bed. Only once all these preparations are made are you ready to start to build.

When Jesus was born, He did not just suddenly appear on the scene. No, there was a time of preparation. All through the Old Testament, we find



references to the coming of the Messiah. Some spoke of His promised coming. Some foretold of where He was to be born, and others spoke of the family He was to be born into. These men, who prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah were called prophets. God wanted to make sure that when the Messiah – the Promised One – arrived that the Jewish people – his Chosen People – would be ready for Him. He wanted a people prepared.

John the Baptist was central to that preparation. He served as a bridge figure between two eras and he belonged to both. His coming marks the end of the old era and the beginning of the new. His function was to prepare the way for the new era and the arrival of the Messiah. His mission was essential.

I want you to notice how Luke introduces John in chapter 3. **1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar.** The appearance of John is given an exact dating. So we know that John the Baptist was not a mythical figure. He was a historical figure with his feet firmly planted in the political situation that existed in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine. Luke does not begin his narrative like this:- “Once upon a time, a long time ago, in a far away land, there lived an eccentric hermit named John.” No, Luke begins with the historical and political context and as a result, we can place the beginning of John’s ministry somewhere between 27 and 28 AD – *Anno Domini* – In the Year of our Lord. Of course, it is no longer politically correct to use such terminology. In today’s cultural we are told that we must be sensitive to minorities and so change this designation to CE which refers to the current or common era.



Luke also gives us the religious context of John’s ministry. It was **2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas.** Actually there was only one high priest at a time. Annas was the high priest until the Romans deposed him. Caiaphas, who was his son-in-law, then became high priest. Guess who really possessed the power behind the scenes? Caiaphas was the high priest, but Annas called the shots.

This is important stuff because if you want to understand any religious movement, you need to understand the times. However, the most important thing for us to understand is that both Jesus and John are historical figures who lived at real places in an identifiable point in history. This story is not myth, fantasy or legend. It is not a manufactured story as some would like us to believe. This is for real. It really

happened. Christianity is not just a system of beliefs. It is a historical faith based firmly in historical fact.

Jesus did not just one day up and begin His ministry. Someone came first, laid the groundwork and did the preparation. That someone was John the Baptist. Even John did not just one day conclude, “Hey, it is high time I did something with my life. I’m going to start preaching.” Instead, we are told, **2 ... the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.** He was already living out in the desert when

λόγος

he received his call. His ministry and his message did not have a human source. I want you to notice the phrase **“the word of God”**. There are two Greek words that are translated “word” in the New Testament. The first is ***logos***. We can say that ***logos*** refers to the Word of God. Jesus is spoken of as the ***logos*** of God

because He is God’s living Word to us. The Bible is the *logos* of God because it is God’s written Word to us. ***Logos*** has a wide range of nuances, but there is another Greek term that is much more specific and that is ***rhema***. With ***rhema*** the emphasis is always on the way in which the message is received. It is not a written word but rather a specific word that is spoken.

The Greek word used in verse 2 is ***rhema***. It tells us that God spoke a personal word – a ***rhema*** word to John the Baptist. God spoke a personal word to John and gave him not only his ministry, but also his message. **3 He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.** That is not a very acceptable message. It is saying to people, “Repent. Clean up your act. Change the direction of your lives so that your sins can be forgiven.” John stands in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets who was given an unpopular message by God. The popularity of the message was not John’s concern. He was just the spokesman – the mouthpiece of God – to deliver this word to the people.

Now a beautiful word picture emerges from our passage. **4 As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:**

**“A voice of one calling in the desert,  
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.**

**5 Every valley shall be filled in,**



**every mountain and hill made low.  
The crooked roads shall become straight,  
the rough ways smooth.  
**6** And all mankind will see God's salvation.'"**



As I read these words, there is picture of a road that emerges in my mind. It is the road that runs from Hopetown to Calabogie. I drove it frequently that summer that I served on the Clyde Forks Pastoral Charge as a student minister. It was a good road until you came to fork at a little place called Brightside. After that it climbed steep hills, dropped down into valleys and wound back and forth like a snake slithering through a rock garden. As I drive it now I am amazed at how it has changed. There are no more really tight turns. Most of them have been straightened out and the worst ones are now gentle

curves. The steep slopes have been cut down and many of the valleys and hollows have been filled in. The rough surface that use to knock the stuffing out of my poor, tired 1964 Volkswagen Bug has been replaced with smooth tarmac. The drive to Calabogie is now actually enjoyable, and not just something to be endured.

What John did in preparing the way for Jesus was to make it easier to discover Jesus. He made sure that people's hearts were in tune, and that their lives were such that they could recognize their Messiah.

Advent is a time of preparation. It is a time to prepare our hearts so that we might celebrate in a proper way the miracle of God coming to earth in human form and being born as a baby in Bethlehem's manger. The problem is that we have so obscured this special celebration with non-essential stuff that most people in our society don't even comprehend the real reason for the season. It is my prayer that through this preparatory time of Advent, we would so focus our lives on Jesus and the transformation which we have experienced, that it will make it possible for unbelievers to see that Jesus is real and that **6 all mankind will see God's salvation.**

You may think that John had a very privileged position and in one sense he did. He was a sign post in the desert pointing towards Jesus. He was a prophet who had a powerful impact on the people of Judea in helping them to turn their lives around. He was the man who had the privilege of baptising Jesus, of seeing the Holy Spirit descend on Him and of hearing the voice of God the Father declare, **22 “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”**

(Luke 3) Jesus Himself said of John in Luke 7: **28 I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”** What does that mean? It means that John the Baptist held a special

place in God’s economy. At the same time, while he was a bridge between the Old Covenant and the New, he never knew the privilege of being in the Kingdom of God. That means that the least of us here this morning, if we know Jesus Christ, then we are “in” the Kingdom of God. And if we are in the Kingdom of God, then we are ahead of John the Baptist. We are greater than John. May we be as zealous as John in pointing others to Jesus so that **all mankind will see God’s salvation.**



### Invitation to Communion Hymn:

**“Behold The Lamb” by Keith & Kristyn Getty (Lyrics)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=481xyHUrWQA>

1. Behold the Lamb who bears our sins away  
 Slain for us and we remember  
 The promise made that all who come in faith  
 Find forgiveness at the cross  
 So we share in this Bread of Life  
 And we drink of His sacrifice  
 As a sign of our bonds of peace  
 Around the table of the King
  
2. The body of our Saviour Jesus Christ  
 Torn for you eat and remember  
 The wounds that heal the death that brings us life  
 Paid the price to make us one  
 So we share in this Bread of Life  
 And we drink of His sacrifice  
 As a sign of our bonds of love  
 Around the table of the King



3. The blood that cleanses every stain of sin  
 Shed for you drink and remember  
 He drained death's cup that all may enter in  
 To receive the life of God  
 So we share in this Bread of Life  
 And we drink of His sacrifice  
 As a sign of our bonds of grace  
 Around the table of the King
  
4. And so with thankfulness and faith we rise  
 To respond and to remember  
 Our call to follow in the steps of Christ  
 As His body here on earth  
 As we share in His suffering  
 We proclaim Christ will come again  
 And we'll join in the feast of heaven  
 Around the table of the King

## The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. AMEN.

## The Invitation to Communion

Jesus said: **28** “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11) As we come to Communion today, I want to stress to you that this is an open and not a closed Table. It is open to all who know and love Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and desire to walk with him in obedience. It does not matter what church you belong to. This is the Lord’s Table and all of his children are welcome to come and share in this feast. **8** **O taste and see that the LORD is good.** (Psalm 34)

## Prayer Before Communion

Lord Jesus, as we come to your Table today, may we come with a sense of our unworthiness to take part in such a sacred meal. Thank you that when we come to you in repentance for our sin, we do not have to worry about our worthiness or goodness. You make us worthy through what you accomplished for us in your death on the Cross. Lord, these elements of Bread and Wine are symbolic of your body and blood. We now set them aside from all common uses to this one holy use. Draw near to us in a special way as we share together in this time of Communion. Through Christ our Lord we pray. **Amen**

## The Communion

Take the Bread, and say after me:

**The Lord Jesus, on the night before he died, took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it and said: “This is my body that is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”**

**The body of Christ broken for me.**

You may partake of the bread.

Take the cup and say after me:

**In the same way, he took the cup after supper, saying: “This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood. Whenever you do it, do it in remembrance of me.”**

**The blood of Christ shed for me.**

You may drink of the cup.

Say your own prayer of thanksgiving for this special time of Communion.

**Closing Hymn: “Beneath The Cross Of Jesus”, Keith and Kristyn Getty (Lyrics)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbaHBmxckC8>

1. Beneath the cross of Jesus  
I find a place to stand  
And wonder at such mercy  
That calls me as I am  
For hands that should discard me  
Hold wounds which tell me come  
Beneath the cross of Jesus  
My unworthy soul is won
2. Beneath the cross of Jesus  
His family is my own



Once strangers chasing selfish dreams  
 Now one through grace alone  
 How could I now dishonor  
 The ones that You have loved  
 Beneath the cross of Jesus  
 See the children called by God

3. Beneath the cross of Jesus  
 The path before the crown  
 We follow in His footsteps  
 Where promised hope is found  
 How great the joy before us  
 To be His perfect bride  
 Beneath the cross of Jesus  
 We will gladly live our lives

## **Benediction**

Go now: wait and work for the coming of the day of God.  
 In the wild places prepare a straight path for the Lord.  
 Lead lives of holiness and godliness,  
 strive to be found at peace,  
 and speak freely of the Lord's comfort and promise.

And may God our shepherd gather you in loving arms;  
 May Christ Jesus reconcile justice and peace within you;  
 And may the Holy Spirit baptise you into the life of God.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.